

Bird garden factsheet

Bird Garden

Birds tend to be the most visible (and definitely the noisiest) native animal visitors to our gardens, so it's easy to forget that our native birds are having a hard time. Land clearing, urbanization, predation, competition from introduced species and climate change are all making life harder for our feathered friends.



Planting a garden to attract birds won't just mean you'll be seeing more birds; it also means birds will have a safe place to eat, nest, breed and sing. You'll love the company and they'll love the garden – win win!

What do birds need?

There is no one plant that will attract all the birds to your garden. Birds need a range of native plants that offer a variety of different options:

1. Plants for feeding;
2. Plants for nesting, and;
3. Plants for shelter.

Feeding

Different birds have different feeding needs so a variety of plants are crucial if you'd like to attract a range of different birds. Some birds, such as honeyeaters, are specialist nectar feeders who also eat insects. Other birds will eat a combination of food sources such as grasses, berries, insects, small lizards, seeds, pollen, fruits and nectar. However, it is a misconception that large amounts of nectar producing plants are needed to attract birds; too many will encourage aggressive birds like the New Holland honeyeaters and wattlebirds. Too many of these birds will keep the smaller species away, and these little birds can be simply delightful. A variety of plant types – from herbs and flowers to grasses to flowering and fruiting shrubs and trees – will mean that you cater to a range of different species and food requirements.

Nesting

Many birds require hollows for both nesting and shelter. However, it can take 80+ years for hollows to develop in trees! Instead of waiting 80 years for your trees seedlings to provide hollows, you can create some nesting boxes. These will provide nesting and shelter or some of the bigger, louder and feistier (and entertaining!) bird species, such as Rosellas, Rainbow Lorikeets, Pardalotes and Kookaburras.

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Shelter

Hollows provide shelter and nesting for many birds. However, there are many other bird species that don't use hollows (or nesting boxes). Providing a variety of plants with differing structures will ensure that all habitat requirements are met. Smaller birds often prefer the more prickly plants, such as Kangaroo thorn (*Acacia paradoxa*) or *Hakea* species. These plants provide birds with shelter, nesting sites and protection from predators.



Selecting your plants

Head to your local nursery or contact your local council about which plants to select. Your selection of plants will also depend on the space you have available and the features of your site.

Note: Many bird attracting plants have flowers which may also attract bees which – depending on proximity to playing areas – should be a consideration for your school or centre.